

Safely Implementing New York City's Computer Vision Framework

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Executive Summary

The New York City Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI) aims to provide NYC agencies with clear guidance on implementing computer vision technology — a type of technology that uses cameras and sensors to “see” and analyze the world. This project argues that the OTI should address this need by adopting a three-tiered framework that provides differing guidelines based on each technology’s privacy risks. The approach would help unify agencies’ disjointed computer vision policies under the city’s [AI Action Plan](#), while allowing for case-to-case flexibility. The project also proposes integrating community outreach into the framework to build public trust in emerging computer vision usages.

Problem

Lacking federal guidelines, NYC relies on a combination of state, city, and agency-specific policies for deploying computer vision. The city’s agencies navigate applying this patchwork of regulations to a wide range of computer vision tools, from waste management to facial recognition. This irregular approach hinders agencies’ ability to assess each tool’s unique privacy, accountability, and public impact risks. As computer vision technology continually evolves, OTI seeks a standardizing framework that can adapt over time.

Solution

This project argues that OTI should institute a tiered, cross-agency framework that provides actionable guidance on how NYC can safely deploy computer vision. This framework would sort computer vision tools into the escalating categories of “foundational,” “operational,” or

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“sensitive,” depending on tools’ potential privacy impacts. The framework would then provide proportional governance guidelines that allow for innovation in the low-risk category and rigorous oversight in the high-risk category. For example, sensitive computer vision uses would require community hearings and independent audits to ensure public accountability. This project posits that by engaging in this tiered approach, OTI could set New York City up for successful implementation of current and novel computer vision applications.

“By streamlining approval pathways for low privacy impact applications of computer vision technology, the City can encourage responsible deployment of tools that improve safety, efficiency, and service delivery without compromising resident privacy.”

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If you’d like to learn more, see the full project at aspenpolicyacademy.org/project/nyc-computer-vision-deployment-2025.



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